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ABSTRACT

This article on the T.E.S.T.S. (Taking Every Student To Success) strategy promotes using a variety of assessment strategies in order to alleviate the stress students experience during exams, enabling those who are not "good test takers" to achieve a higher degree of success. If the primary purpose of giving a test is to determine whether or not a student has mastered the material, alternative methods of assessment can accomplish the same goal. In addition, alternative assessment can more easily be designed to determine whether the student truly knows the material or has just memorized it for the test. Several methods of alternative assessment are proposed in this article, including group testing, jeopardy tests, crossword puzzles, and scavenger hunt tests. Procedures for implementation are provided, as well as instructions on how use each type of alternative exam. Strategies for grading essay tests also are discussed, with instructions on procedure and how to grade. The article concludes with a list of reasons for using non-traditional exams, including factors such as less test-anxiety, more stimulating learning, tapping creativity, having fun, and making the learning experience easier for both students and instructor. (AS)

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T.E.S.T.S. (Taking Every Student to Success): Another Way to Assess

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T.E.S.T.S.: Taking Every Student To Success

T.E.S.T.S. (Taking Every Student To Success): Another way to assess

Rationale: Just mention the word "test" and immediately your hands get clammy, your heart beats faster and your pulse races. So much emphasis has been put on tests that students invariably feel defeated before a test is even begun.

If the primary purpose of giving a test is to determine whether or not a student has mastered the material, alternative methods of assessment can accomplish the same as the "traditional" test. In addition, alternative assessment can more easily be designed to determine whether the student truly *knows* the material or has just memorized it for the test.

By using a variety of assessment strategies much of the pressure of testing is lessened and students can demonstrate success even if they are not good "test-takers".

Research relevant to topic: None of us enjoys being in a setting in which we consistently fail. Success experiences are instrumental in developing feelings of self-worth and confidence in attempting new activities (Jones & Jones, 1986). It is through achievement that academic self-confidence grows, and increased confidence in turn promotes achievement through further learning (Covington & Beery, 1976).

Group Testing

This testing procedure allows you to determine whether or not students have mastered the material in a less intimidating manner. It also allows for group interaction, competition and is a lot of fun.

Procedure

1. Randomly assign students to a group - having no more than 4 or 5 in each group. Random assignment can be done by having students draw numbers or colored pieces of paper out of a box.

2. Develop test questions and cut test up so that one question is on each strip. Put strips in a box.

3. Make up an envelope for each group. The envelope should contain "chips" (colored paper cut about 1-2" square. The number of chips is determined by how many you want each group to have. Each chip is worth X number of points.

4. Give an envelope to each group and have them put their names on the envelope.

How to test

1. Draw a test question out of the box and read that question aloud to the first group. Allow about 20-30 seconds for an answer. If the question is answered correctly, move on to the next group with the next question.

2. If the question is answered incorrectly, collect a chip from that group and ask the same question to the next group. If the second group answers correctly, they receive the chip. If they answer incorrectly, collect a chip from the second group and move to the third group.

3. If the third group answers correctly they get both chips. If they answer incorrectly the fourth group gets a chance.

4. If no group is able to answer the question you keep all the chips collected and start with another question.

5. The test continues around the room until all questions have been asked.

6. Score is determined by counting up the number of chips left in each envelope and multiplying it by the worth of the chips.

Jeopardy Test

Overview

This is test is done in a classroom group but is answered individually. It brings a little levity to a usually tense situation.

Procedure

1. Determine categories and point values for your test. You should have about 5 categories and about 5 or 6 point values. (i.e. categories could be topics discussed and points could range from 2 - 10 depending upon the total point value of the test.

2. Make large numbers on colored paper for each of the categories. Type categories on colored paper in extra large print.

3. Develop "answers" (the students come up with questions) and print in extra large type on colored paper . Hang categories on board or wall and hang answers beneath numbers.

Category	2	5	8	10
Category	2	5	8	10
Category	2	5	8	10
Category	2	5	8	10
Category	2	5	8	10

4. You may want to make it so that the total points available are more than 100 points so that students can have some extra credit.

5. A "daily double" under one of the numbers and over one of the answers provides additional points and adds interest to the test.

6. It is helpful to develop a "crib sheet" for students to use to come up with responses. This provides them a chance for recognition rather than straight memorization and recall.

7. Develop an answer sheet that corresponds to the test board with the categories down the side and the point values across the top. The student writes the "question" (in response to the provided answer) in the appropriate box.

8. If you put the correct responses on the back of the "answers" on the board you can exchange papers and have the students grade the tests during class. This provides instant feedback to the testers. Simply turn over the blocks with the "answers" and the "questions" will be shown.

How to test

1. Students answer questions independently.

2. Call on a student to choose a category and a point amount. Uncover the "answer" and let students write their response in the appropriate block of the answer sheet.

3. Continue to call on different students until all blocks are uncovered. Allow additional time after all blocks are uncovered to let students complete those they didn't get first time around.

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Crossword Puzzle Test

Overview

This unique test can be used as either the entire test or a portion of a test . It is a novel way to test objectively.

Procedure

1. Using *Crossword Studio* software develop a list of items which will be your test answers. You may want to provide a word bank at the bottom of this list for students to use. Include more words in the word list than are needed so the student cannot use a process of elimination in answering.

2. The software will create the puzzle using the words you have input. You will then need to input the clues for the "across" and "down" sections of the puzzle.

3. Determine how much each of the items will be worth and indicate it on the instructions portion of the test.

How to test

1. Each student works independently to fill in the crossword puzzle using the words from the word list to answer the "across" and "down" items.

2. The crossword puzzle could be graded during class by having students exchange puzzles. Use an overhead of the puzzle to provide the correct answers.

Grading Essay Tests
(making your life easier)

Overview

The grading of essay tests is often very subjective and can sometimes produce unfair grades based on grammar, neatness or any number of factors having nothing to do with the content of the essay. This is a way to grade essays with more objectivity and fairness.

Procedure

1. Before writing your essay question, determine what it is you want from the students.

2. Write down the criteria that you think is essential in determining correctness of response.

3. Decide whether any of these criteria should be weighted more heavily than the others. Put a point value by each of the pre-established criteria.

4. Develop the essay question based on your criteria. Be sure the question you ask will elicit the response you want.

5. Decide *in advance* if, and how much, you are going to count off for grammar and sentence structure.

6. Decide *in advance* if, and how much, you will give as extra credit for information provided beyond your criteria.

7. Make a checklist of the criteria on which you will grade.

How to grade

1. Read the essay and as the student addresses one of the criteria, mark it on your checklist.

2. If the student does not address one of the criteria, indicate it on the checklist and take off the number of points that was predetermined.

3. If the student provides additional information beyond the criteria for which you are looking, indicate on the checklist and give the student the predetermined extra points for the extra information.

4. Give each student their checklist showing points received and the criteria you were looking for in the answer.

Scavenger Hunt Test

Overview

This is an active and fun way to get students to complete an "open book/open anything" test.

Procedure

1. Make up test questions using a variety of resources - books, journals, internet, etc.

2. This can be either an "in-class" or a take-home test, an individual or a team test. It works best as an in-class, team test.

3. If done in class and as a group, have a small prize (candy, popcorn, balloons) for the team that brings the answers back first.

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How to test

1. If the test is to be a take home and/or is done individually, hand out the test and give them a time/date that it will be due back.

2. If students are completing the test in class and as a group, divide the class into teams of 4 to 5 students (randomly assigned) then hand out the test. All teams will start the test at the same time.

3. Tell the teams what time they must be back with the answers.

4. Teams are free to go to the ELC/LRC or may work in the classroom, commons or anywhere else that is necessary in order to gather information for the test.

5. The first team to bring back the answers wins the prize. You could also have a prize for the team with the most *correct* answers.

Why bother?

Why should you bother to make anything other than a "traditional" test? There are a number of reasons for doing so.

1. **Why do you test?** Is it for the sake of a figuring a grade or to determine what it is the students know? If your reason for testing is to see what the students know then you can determine that through means other than a standard multiple-choice, true-false or fill-in-the-blank test.

2. **Why not have some fun?** Who says that tests have to be scary and intimidating? If you can get the same information from students in a relaxed atmosphere that is fun, why not do it?

3. **Some students experience "test anxiety".** Test anxiety is a very real affliction. Some students are literally paralyzed by even the *thought* of a test. A test that is in a different format, is done as a group, or allows for some freedom to discuss is less apt to cause test anxiety.

4. **A variety of test formats creates less boring learning experiences.** Why do the same thing over and over? If you are not getting good results from your traditional testing format, try something different. It will add some pizazz to your tests!

5. **It allows you to use your creativity.** You can use any (or all) of these test formats offered here or come up with some of your own. Students will think

you are brilliant (which you are!) and you will have a chance to show them each time you give a test how clever you can be.

6. It makes your life easier. Although some of these tests may take extra time initially, it will be well worth it. Most of these tests can be graded during class, it provides immediate feedback on the student's performance and you don't have to carry stacks of papers home with you.